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The Homes of George Taylor

Signer of the Declaration of Independence

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE
GEORGE TAYLOR CHAPTER, DAUGHTERS OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION

AT EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA, DECEMBER 6, 1922

BY

B. F. FACKENTHAL, JR., Sc.D.

OF RIEGELSVILLE, PA.

(Reprint from Bucks County Historical Society Papers, Vol. V)



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Geo. Taylor

GIFT
AUTHOR
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The Homes of George Taylor, Signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Paper read before the George Taylor Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, at Easton, Pa., December 6, 1922.

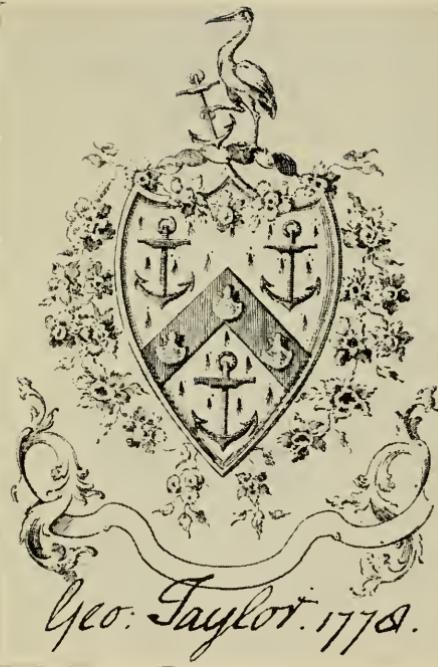
BY B. F. FACKENTHAL, JR., S.C.D., OF RIEGELSVILLE, PA.

(This paper was not read before the Bucks County Historical Society, but in view of the fact that it is a complement to the paper presented by Mr. Ely, its publication has been requested, and it seems fitting therefore that it should be printed in our proceedings.)

ON our great national holiday, last July (1922) when Mrs. Fackenthal entertained the members of this Chapter at Riegelsville, I was a privileged guest, and in an unguarded moment exhibited to your Regent my file of George Taylor papers, contained in a special drawer set aside for that purpose. Seeing so many papers may have led her to suppose that it was new material, whereas there is but little to tell about this man, whose memory your society has honored, that is not already known to most of you. There has however been very little written about his homes which is made the special subject of this paper.

It is unfortunate that historians have fallen into errors in their accounts of this interesting man. Corrections do not always correct, or reach the same readers. This is true not only of the life and services of George Taylor, but of many items of other history as well.

The story that George Taylor was a redemptioner; that he came to America "with his parents" from Ireland in 1736, and first settled at Durham Furnace, where he was a furnace filler; that he was the son of Nathaniel Taylor of the Irish settlement in Northampton County; that he came to America with his father and a younger brother; and such like statements, are made by all his biographers. Just where these false and misleading statements originated have not been determined. They are doubtless all based on Sanderson's *Lives of the Signers*, first published in 1823-27, and revised by Henry D. Gilpin, Esq., (b. 1801, d. 1859), a prominent Philadelphia lawyer, who in 1840, was Attorney General of the United States. The same erroneous accounts are contained in the *Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, by



GEORGE TAYLOR'S BOOKPLATE.

Coat of Arms of the ancient Taylor family of Durant Hall, Derbyshire, England. (The heiress married Sir Charles Skyrmisher, Knight Templar Charles 2nd.)

Arms: Ermine on a chevron gules between three anchors, as many escallops argent.

Crest: A Stork resting the dexter foot on an anchor proper.

Rev. Charles H. Goodrich, New York, 1829; *A Compendious History of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, 1831, by Dr. Nathaniel Dwight; *Biographies of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, by L. Carrel Judson, Philadelphia, 1839; *Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, by Benson J. Lossing, 1848; Henry's *History of the Lehigh Valley, Easton*, 1860; and in Condit's *History of Easton*, 1885. County and State histories, biographical dictionaries and encyclopaedias repeat the same story, and local historians naturally follow along the same lines, and all *inter alia*, say that he was born in Ireland.

Newly discovered evidence, however, points to England as his birthplace, and the Taylor family tradition that he came from Ireland, may be wrong. This is confirmed by his bookplate which throws a flood of light on his ancestry. It contains the coat of arms of the Taylors of Durant, the ancient Taylor family of Derbyshire, England. One of his bookplates has been presented to me by the American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Mass., from which the engraving shown herewith has been made. As can be seen it contains his autograph signature, and the date 1778. The American Antiquarian Society has another copy of this bookplate, with his signature bearing date 1776. A third bookplate (of which a photostat has been sent me), bearing date 1776, is in the unique collection of signers autographs owned by Mr. Kenyon V. Painter of Cleveland, Ohio. In the appraisement of Geo. Taylor's estate there were 79 books, all of which doubtless contained his bookplate. It is not likely that George Taylor would have used this bookplate if not entitled to do so, and further suggests that he may have been in touch with the English family of Taylors and most likely a kinsman.

I remember in 1898 sending a signed communication to an Easton newspaper, in which I took exception to certain statements made by a prominent historian of Easton in his lecture on the life of George Taylor. He had repeated the erroneous statements to which I have referred, and moreover placed special emphasis on a statement that George Taylor was guarding the Atlantic coast during the Revolutionary War. He read copies of several letters signed by a George Taylor, written from Freehold and Shrewsbury in New Jersey, to justify himself. It was later shown that those letters had not been written by our

George Taylor, but by another of that name. This is more clearly pointed out by Mr. Simon Gratz, in his delightful *Book about Autographs*.¹ Mr. Gratz shows that one of the letters, to which I have referred, published in the Pennsylvania Archives² and the other one formerly in possession of Mr. L. C. Cist of St. Louis, are not by our George Taylor. In like manner a document in the manuscript department of the Pennsylvania Historical Society at Philadelphia, dated February 3, 1763, and a letter in the Congressional Library at Washington, are not genuine. The one at Washington bears date 1793, whereas our George Taylor passed away in 1781. I have examined many autograph letters and documents containing the signature of George Taylor, including copies of those contained in the twenty-two complete sets of autographs of the signers, as detailed by Mr. Charles F. Jenkins in his splendid article published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History*, Vol. 49, p. 231, and have never seen a signature of George Taylor where he writes his name out in full, but always Geo. Taylor.³



We have to thank the late Gov. Samuel W. Pennypacker for aiding us in the most incidental way, in obtaining a correct history of George Taylor during the early years of his life in America. It is said of Mr. Pennypacker that he had made an arrangement with the employees of a certain papermill, using old paper, by which they laid aside for his inspection all old books and documents published prior to a certain date, 1820 I think, and in that way he secured many books and papers that were scarce and of historic value. On one occasion, not many years prior to his death, he stopped a cart passing through the streets of Pottstown, Pa., loaded with old junk, which on examination was found to contain among other old paper, the Potts books and papers on their way to the scrap heap. He purchased the load and thus secured 110 ledgers and other account books of early forges and

¹ *A Book About Autographs* by Mr. Simon Gratz, p. 249; Campbell, Philadelphia, 1920.

² Pennsylvania Archives, First Series, Vol. V, p. 49. The original of this letter is now in the possession of Haverford College.

³ Under date of July 4, 1926, Mr. Jenkins revised his list and now reports having located 27 complete sets of signer's autographs.

blast furnaces, including Coventry, Pine, Mount Pleasant, Pool, Valley and Pottsgrove forges and Colebrookdale, Christine, Redding and Warwick blast furnaces. Colebrookdale was the very first blast furnace in Pennsylvania, built in 1720, which was seven years before Durham blast furnace was built. The Governor had these books bound, indexed and annotated. I had the pleasure of looking through them in his library at Schwenksville. At the sale of his library, by his executors, these old ledgers were bought by the Pennsylvania Historical Society, where they may be consulted by any one interested.

When Dr. Henry C. Mercer was preparing his book on firebacks and stoveplates for publication, called *The Bible in Iron*, published in 1914, Mr. Warren S. Ely went over to Schwenksville to search through these Potts books for stoveplate-information, as firebacks and stoveplates were cast at Colebrookdale, Christine; Redding and Warwick furnaces at an early day. Mr. Ely spent some days in his researches and was surprised to find that George Taylor had for many years been connected with Coventry Forge and Warwick Furnace, and that it was there, in Chester County, on French Creek, and not at Durham Furnace that he established himself in 1736, on his arrival in America. Mr. Ely has given us the benefit of this new George Taylor information in his splendid paper read before the Bucks County Historical Society in 1918. (See ante, page 101.) The Potts books show that George Taylor began his metallurgical career as bookkeeper at those works; that he was promoted to the position of manager, and on the death of Samuel Savage, Jr., early in 1742, married, before the close of the same year, his widow, whose maiden name was Ann Taylor, daughter of Isaac Taylor, Deputy Surveyor General of Chester County. He then assumed control of his wife's business and settled the estate of Mr. Savage.

The Historical Society at Doylestown has lately come into possession of two documents in the handwriting of George Taylor, both bearing his signature. One dated 1739, is an invoice to Hon. Thomas Penn for pig iron shipped, presumably from Warwick Furnace, to Clement Plumstead, the other dated 1741, in an agreement with an inventory of teams, wagons and other personal property at Warwick Furnace, when a one-half interest thereof was about to be leased to John Potts. I take pleasure in

The Hon^{ble} Thomas Penn Esqr & Jo. Anna Nutt
& Co for Pig Melted At the W^m Clement Furnace
1739 1738 June 1738

No^d 6 So 1 S By Nicholas Robinson.

So 1 S By Francis Robinson.

So 1 S By Joseph Polson.

9 So 1 S By Christian Cost.

So 1 S By John Davis.

10 So 1 S 5 By Martin Birner.

13 So 1 S By Copper Store.

So 1 S By Peter Paul.

So 1 S By Jacob Brink.

16 So 1 S By Christian Cost.

So 1 S By John Shonee.

17 So 1 S By Nicholas Robinson.

19 So 1 S By Francis Robinson.

21 So 1 S By Peter Brundum Jr.

So 1 S 5 10 By John Coven.

15.10.10 Q. 17 fathans w £ 108.10.0

For Anna Nutt & Co Iron Receiptd,

George Taylor Clerk

Note that Pigs were agreed for 7.10. - I am w^m R. B.
Shankley.

INVOICE FOR PIG IRON, NOVEMBER 6-22, 1739.

In the handwriting of George Taylor, with his signature as clerk for Anna Nutt & Co., at Warwick Furnace. The earliest known signature of George Taylor. Original in Library of Bucks County Historical Society.

presenting this Chapter with photostats of these two documents.

In 1752, when Samuel Savage, the third (son of Samuel Savage, Jr., deceased), came of age no time was lost in serving written notice on George Taylor, asking him to resign the management of Coventry Forge. About that time Mrs. Taylor's tenure of, and interest in the Warwick Furnace terminated, although she held a life interest in the two farms. The Taylors continued to reside in Chester County until 1754 or 1755, when George Taylor and Samuel Flower formed a co-partnership and leased the Durham Iron Works in Durham Township, Bucks County, Pa., for a period of five years, with the privilege of five additional years. The George Taylors then moved to Durham. During this leasehold they made "cannon shot" at Durham, presumably for the Provincial Government during the French and Indian War.⁴ There is much documentary evidence to show Taylor's residence in Durham, such as his appointment on a jury to review a road, his commission as a justice of the peace in 1757 and again in 1761 and 1763, as well as his letters written from there. His home was in the so-called "Mansion House," on the Durham Road about one-fourth mile west of the site of the 1727 blast furnace. It is said that the original house was destroyed by fire, and the new stone house, still standing, was built on the old foundations. The Galloway heirs later sold the farm on which the house was located to the Longs. After the death of Richard Backhouse in 1795, his son James converted this Mansion House into a hotel, for which he was first granted a license in 1798. It had always been the polling place for Durham Township, but when abandoned as a public house in 1871, a special election was held on June 21st of that year, when it was decided to remove the polling place to the village of Monroe. It was in that old house, in Durham Township, during his second leasehold of Durham furnace, that George Taylor made his home for a second time, when he signed the Declaration of Independence. It is likely that a monument will be erected to mark the site, and also one to mark the site of the old Durham blast furnace built in 1727, now the property of Harvey F. Riegel. An old stone arch of this furnace can still be seen surrounded by a growth of trees. Occasionally

⁴ See Bucks County Court Records, September Term, 1765.

cannon balls and shot are found on property adjacent to the old furnace-site. There are quite a number of cannon balls and shot now in the museum of the Bucks County Historical Society, that were cast at Durham.

During the latter part of 1763, at the expiration of his ten years lease of Durham Iron Works, George Taylor, with his family, moved to Easton doubtless making his home in the stone house at the northeast corner of Northampton and Fermer (now Second) Streets, which he bought at sheriff's sale December 23, 1761, as the property of Jacob Bachman.⁵ This was Lot No. 24, on the original plan of Easton, size 60 feet on Northampton and 220 feet on Second Streets. The stone house now standing on that corner is doubtless the same house that was occupied by George Taylor. The deed is not recorded, nor was it acknowledged in the prothonotary's office. The price paid, £117, 15s, 10d., indicates that the property was improved when he bought it. There is no explanation as to the use he made of that property from the time he bought it in 1761 until he moved into it in 1763. While living there he also obtained possession of Lot No. 73 on the opposite or northwest corner of the same streets, size 55 feet by 220 feet, whereon he built a stone stable. It appears that this lot had not been patented, and Taylor occupied it by permission of the Penns. It was on that corner, where in after years, the home of Alexander Wilson was located. On August 24, 1779, George Taylor sold Lot No. 24 to Theophilus Shannon for the sum of £1,300 Pennsylvania money (currency was then depreciated), and at the same time he sold his interest in Lot No. 73, with stone stable to the same party for the sum of £100 Pennsylvania money. In the deeds transferring these properties he describes himself as living in Greenwich Township, Sussex (now Warren) County, New Jersey. (Deed Book D, Vol. I, pp. 179 and 180.)

After moving to Easton he at once took an active part in public affairs, showing that he must have been a prominent and influential citizen. He took a leading part in building the new courthouse, all moneys for which, it is said, passed through his hands. He was a member of the Provincial Assembly from 1764 to 1769 inclusive. He was commissioned a Justice of the Peace

⁵ Lot No. 24 was patented to Jacob Bachman March 14, 1754, Patent book A, Vol. 18, p. 236. Bachman mortgaged it to John Potts November 27, 1754. The mortgage was foreclosed and the property bought by Geo. Taylor.

for Northampton County in 1764 and regularly thereafter until 1772.

On March 10, 1767, he bought a tract of 331 acres of land, fronting on the Lehigh River, in Allen Township, at which is now Lower Catasauqua, Lehigh County, being part of a larger tract known as the "Manor of Chawton." (Deed book B, Vol. I, p. 102, etc.) On this property there had been built a substantial stone house with walls two feet thick which is still standing in a fairly good state of preservation. He sold this Allen Township property to John Benezet, the deed bears date March 27, 1776. It appears, however, that he moved to Durham prior to that time, probably in 1774, when he leased the Durham property from Joseph Galloway. During the year 1772 some of his letters were written from Northampton (the name of which was changed to Allentown on April 16, 1838). This suggests that he may, at that time, have been living with his son James, who moved there early in 1772. An autograph letter, signed by him, dated December 30, 1775, now in possession of Haverford College, fixes his residence in Durham at that time. Just what his object was in moving to Allen Township does not appear, there were doubtless no iron works in that neighborhood, and therefore it is likely that he was engaged in agricultural pursuits, and besides he had his public business to attend to. A photograph of his Catasauqua home, which I presented to this chapter several years ago, hangs on yonder wall, and an etching of it is shown herewith. In 1912, when I visited that house, there were a number of firebacks in the fireplaces. One of them had been presented to the Lehigh County Historical Society, which suggests that one might be secured for this room. These plates contain no embellishments other than the initials and date "G. T. 1768." I had one of them drilled for chemical analysis and found the phosphorus and manganese to be about five times too high for it to have been made from Durham ores, and concluded that they were cast at some other blast furnace.⁶

On September 17, 1765, George Taylor bought of Peter Kichline, Sheriff, as the property of Nicholas Scull, Easton Lot No. 167, 55 feet front on Northampton street, on which Scull had built a stone house. (Deed book B, Vol. I, p. 42.) That property is now

⁶ Analysis of fireback: Silicon 1.00, phosphorus .54, manganese .56, sulphur .067, copper none.



GEORGE TAYLOR HOUSE AT LOWER CATASAUQUA, LEHIGH COUNTY, PA.

(Prior to 1812, Allen Township, Northampton County.)

On March 10, 1767, George Taylor purchased from Thomas Armstrong, 331 acres of land on the Lehigh River in Allen Township, part of a larger tract known as the "Manor of Chawton," on which this substantial stone house had been built. Mrs. Taylor passed away in this house in 1768. On March 27, 1776, George Taylor conveyed the property to John Benezet of Philadelphia, but prior to that time he moved to Durham in Bucks County, probably in 1774, when for a second time he leased the Durham Iron Works, where he was living on August 2, 1776, when he signed the Declaration of Independence.

owned by the estates of Mary Moyer, C. L. Magee and Jacob Hay, and is occupied by the United Retail Chemists and the F. & W. Grand 5, 10, and 25 Cent Store. George Taylor bought that house for his son James to whom he and his wife, Ann Taylor, conveyed it October 25, 1765, for the consideration of 5 shillings and "their natural love and affection." (Deed book B, Vol. I, p. 51, and another corrected deed for same property recorded Deed book C, Vol. I, p. 17.)

Later James Taylor moved to Allentown, and while living there he and his wife Elizabeth conveyed his Easton property, December 30, 1771, to Myer Hart of Easton. (Deed book C, Vol. I, p. 18.) On January 2, 1772, James Taylor bought from Myer Hart, lot No. 342 of the plan of Allentown. (Deed book C, Vol. I, p. 57.) They may possibly have exchanged properties.

After the death of James Taylor in 1775, his Allentown property was sold by the sheriff, on June 19, 1776, and bought by Phillip Ritter. (Deed book C, Vol. I, p. 387.) It appears that George Taylor was frequently called upon, to give financial aid to his son James.

On May 21, 1763, George Taylor bought certain rights of Philip Rustein, in Lot No. 502 on James Street in Allentown. (Deed book A, Vol. I, p. 295) on which a house had been built. I can find no record to show how Taylor disposed of that property.

Ann, wife of George Taylor, died in 1768, shortly after they moved into their Catasauqua house. It is not known where her body lies buried, but there is evidence to show that George Taylor, while living in Durham, was connected with the Red Hill Presbyterian Church. This is further shown by the fact that on March 8, 1765, a lot of one acre of land (size 10 perches by 16 perches) at Gallows Hill, on the Durham Road in Bucks County, was deeded to Rev. Richard Treat and George Taylor, in trust for that congregation, for a burying ground, and Mrs. Taylor may have been buried there. (See Bucks County Deed book, Vol. XX, p. 235.) Some historians theorize that she was buried at Easton. Some graves found near the Taylor house at Catasauqua make it not unlikely that she was buried there. George and Ann Taylor had two children, Ann, called Nancy, who died in childhood, and James, who was born at Warwick Furnace in 1746. James married Elizabeth, daughter of Lewis Gordon, who

was the first resident lawyer to practice at Easton. Col. McCabe of Richmond, Va., writes that James and Elizabeth were mere children when they married. Elizabeth was born August 23, 1750, and was therefore but 25 years old when James died October 9, 1775, at the age of 29 years. After his death their five small children, George, Ann, Mary, Thomas and James, Jr., were cared for by their grandfather, George Taylor. Elizabeth, widow of James, on July 18, 1780, deeded to George Taylor, for the care and education of her children, the one-half of her interest in the real estate which she inherited under the will of her father, Lewis Gordon, which included Easton Lot No. 171, (size 56 feet by 220 feet) on which Able's Opera House now stands. (Deed book C, Vol. I, p. 545.)^{6a} Of the five children of James and Elizabeth, Ann married Samuel Swann and moved to Powhatton, Virginia, taking with her, and making a home for her two brothers, George (who did not marry), and James, Jr.; Mary died young; Thomas was drowned in the Lehigh River; James, Jr., married his first cousin, Anna Maria Miranda Gordon, at Alexandria, Va., Dec. 19, 1786. He died at Richmond, Va., in 1837. They were the parents of four children, one of whom, Sophia Gordon Taylor, married, first, to John Rutledge Smith, and second, to the Rev. John Collins McCabe, D.D., of the Episcopal Church, who were the parents of Col. W. Gordon McCabe, Litt.D., LL.D., and who was therefore a great-great-grandson of George Taylor. Col. McCabe says that George Taylor has many legitimate descendants living in Virginia.

I have corresponded with Col. McCabe for many years and had the pleasure of visiting him in his home at Richmond, and from him obtained much history of his distinguished ancestor. As can be seen by his will, George Taylor left a family of five natural children, whose mother was his housekeeper, Naomi Smith. Some of their descendants added the family name of Savage, as a middle name, with the intention of representing that they were legitimate descendants of George Taylor, much to the annoyance of Col. McCabe and other legitimate descendants.

George Taylor obtained his military title of Colonel on July 21, 1775, when at a meeting held at Bogart's tavern in Bucks County,

^{6a} This deed recites that Elizabeth is about to depart from her usual place of abode.

I George Taylor do swear that I renounce and
refuse all Allegiance to George the Third King of
Great Britain his Heirs and Successors and that I will
be faithful and bear true Allegiance to the Common
Wealth of Pennsylvania as a free and independent
State; and that I will not at any time do or cause to be
done any slatter or Shing that will be prejudicial or
injurious to the Freedom and Independence thereof
declared by Congress; And also, that I will discover
and make known to some one Justice of the Peace of
the said State all treasons or traitorous Conspiracies
that I now know, or hereafter shall know, to be formed
against this or any other of the United States of
America - So help me God -

No. 215 1778 February 3^d:

Geo: Taylor

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA.

As taken by George Taylor, February 3, 1778.

The "Test Oath," required by an Act of Congress passed in 1777.

he was elected Colonel of the Third Battalion of Militia.⁷ Previous to that time he was enrolled as an "Associator." During the year 1777, an act was passed called the "Test Act," under which it was required that every man should take an oath of allegiance to the Government of the United States. Such as signed the test oath were called "Associators," and such as did not sign were called "Non-Associators." Col. George Taylor took this test oath on February 3, 1778, the original document has been preserved, and a photostatic copy sent to me by Hon. James B. Laux, of New York, in order that I might have the etching made of it which accompanies this paper. There is no record to show that Col. Taylor was ever engaged in active military service, he was too much occupied making ammunition at Durham, and in other pursuits in the interest of our new government.

GEORGE TAYLOR LEASES DURHAM IRON WORKS FOR FIVE YEARS,
FROM NOVEMBER 1773, WITH THE PRIVILEGE OF AN
ADDITIONAL FIVE YEARS.

Although there is evidence to show an earlier iron operation at Durham, the organized company which built the blast furnace of 1727, dates from 1726. The company was composed of twelve prominent gentlemen, all from Philadelphia, except Jeremiah Langhorne, who was from Trevose in Bucks County.⁸ When the property was partitioned among the owners, deed dated December 24, 1773, (all the original owners having passed away), it included all of Durham Township (6,410 acres 123 perches) 644 acres in Springfield Township, 30 acres in Lower Saucon Township and 1,456 acres 29 perches in Williams Township, the last two townships in Northampton County, 8,511 acres 100 perches in all.

In the partition proceedings, that part of the property containing the mines, quarries, forges and blast furnace was allotted to Joseph Galloway and his wife Grace, *née* Growden. It appears however, by the petition addressed by George Taylor to the Supreme Executive Council on July 22, 1778, that he had leased the plant from Joseph Galloway prior to the deed of partition, viz, during November 1773 for five years, with the privilege of "hav-

⁷ American Archives, Vol. II, p. 1787; Pennsylvania Archives, Fifth Series, Vol. VIII, p. 14.

⁸ The twelve gentlemen forming the original Durham Iron Company were Jeremiah Langhorne, Anthony Morris, James Logan, Charles Read, Robert Ellis, George Fitzwater, Clement Plumsted, William Allen, Andrew Bradford, John Hopkins, Thomas Lindley and Joseph Turner.

ing it renewed upon the same terms, for five years more."

I need not speak of the loyal services of this patriot during the Revolutionary struggle, that are so well known to all of you, but you may not know that George Taylor was the very first in Pennsylvania to make shot and shells for the Continental Army. This is clearly shown by his correspondence and by documents published in the Colonial Records.⁹ The first shipment of which we have a record, was made August 25, 1775, and consisted of round shot, viz: 250 of 18 lbs., 4 of 25 lbs. and 4 of 32 lbs. There is much evidence to show that George Taylor was living at Durham, and engaged in making shot and shell for the Continental Army from 1775 to 1778 inclusive.

The following letter, in possession of Col. McCabe's family, addressed to Col. George Taylor at Durham by Clement Biddle, is not only interesting from an historical standpoint, but also fixes the residence of George Taylor at Durham on July 4, 1776, where his home was on August 2, 1776, when he signed the Declaration of Independence:

Dear Sire:

Philadelphia, July 4, 1776.

I have yours of 3d inst., and am glad of your forwardness with the Shott—pray send all of them down as soon as possible—we don't know what hour we may want them—the things ordered shall be prepared also provided I can get the Salt.

Genl. Howe's army are with the fleet of 130 sail at Sandy Hook we hourly expect to hear of some important stroke there—we have about 10,000 Effective men at N. York—6,000 militia coming from Connecticut—3 to 4,000 marched from Jersey toward Amboy—Col. Broadhead's Rifle men and others of our troops marching to the Jerseys to join them—a few tories are in arms in Monmouth County—Jersey.

At Charleston, So. Carolina, Genl. Clinton had got one man of war and 30 transports over the bar but lost a 50 gun ship in attempting to get over. Genl. Lee had arrived with 1,300 Troops from No. Carolina to join their Provincial Troops and it said that Charles Town is well fortified. It thickens around us and the day is big with the fate of America but I trust that we shall be able by union and perseverance to establish that freedom and Independence which Congress have just declared nem con.

I am Dr Sir Yr Hble. Servt
CLEMENT BIDDLE.

The three pound shot are so much wanted that I am directed to desire you immediately to send them down by all means.

Addressed to

Col. George Taylor,
Durham.

⁹ Colonial Records, First Series, Vol. X, pp. 297-298-315-331-339-354-365-373-381-382-598-690.

During George Taylor's leasehold of Durham it appears that a great part of his pig iron was refined at the Greenwich and Chelsea Forges in Greenwich Township, Sussex (now Warren) County, New Jersey, and that his friend, Richard Backhouse, was associated with him, at least for part of the time, in these refining operations. In two deeds recorded here at Easton, dated August 24, 1779, George Taylor is described as living in Greenwich Township, New Jersey, doubtless at Greenwich Forge, on Musconetcong Creek, about five miles from the site of the old Durham Furnace.¹⁰ I am sure the New Jersey members of this Chapter are pleased to know that he once lived within the borders of their state.

GEORGE TAYLOR PURCHASES ONE-FOURTH INTEREST IN
DURHAM IRON WORKS.

When Joseph Galloway allied himself to the British cause, he was in 1778, attainted of treason. His large holdings of land in Pennsylvania, which in addition to Durham, Trevose, Belmont and elsewhere, including also the now celebrated Hog Island, were seized and sold by the Commissioner of Forfeited Estates. An attempt was then made to dispossess George Taylor of Durham, but the Supreme Executive Council decided that he might remain in possession until the first period of his lease had expired. George Taylor was himself a member of the very first Supreme Executive Council, which met daily in Philadelphia.¹¹ He did not miss a single meeting from the date of its organization, March 4, 1777, until prevented from attending by sickness.

The following is copy of a letter in the archives of the Pennsylvania Historical Society at Philadelphia:

Sir—

Durham, May 24, 1777.

I have been confined to my chamber for four weeks past by a violent fever. I am just now beginning to walk about. You will please let his Excellency the President know that as soon as my health will permit I will attend the Council

To Timothy Matlack, Esqr.

I am with great Respect &c.
Sir, Your Most Humbl' Servt.
Geo. Taylor.

The Journal of the Moravian Society at Bethlehem, under date

¹⁰ Northampton County, Deed Book D, Vol. I, pp. 179 and 180.

¹¹ Colonial Records, First Series, Vol. XI, p. 173.

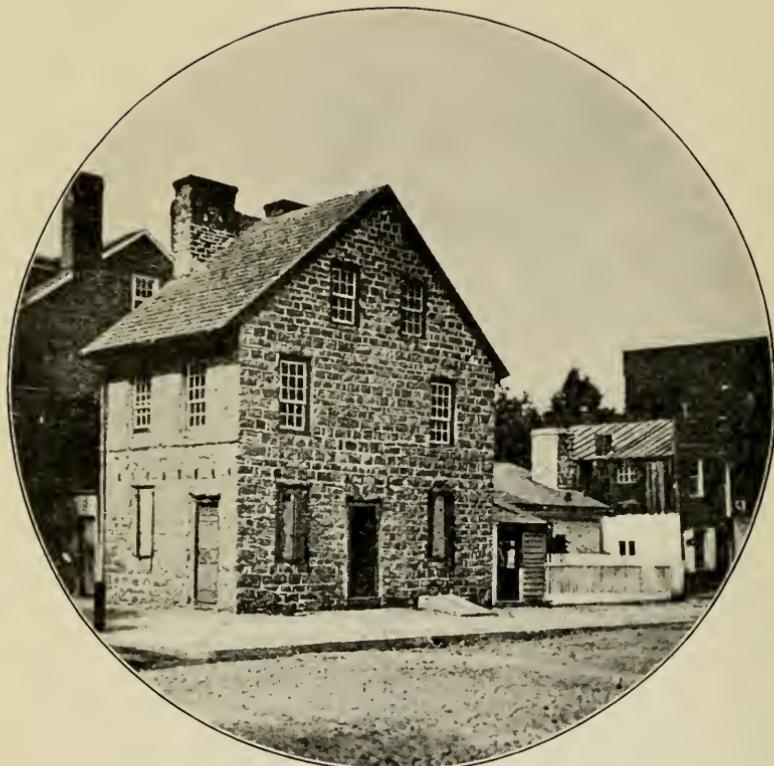
of July 10-11, 1776, states that there were elected five Germans and three Irish farmers as delegates; these delegates appointed the member of Congress, who in this instance was George Taylor. In the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History*, Vol. IX, p. 279, James Allen, a son of C. J. William Allen, says in his diary, under date of February 17, 1777:

The Assembly have appointed Gen. Roberdeau, J. B. Smith, William Moore & reappointed R. Morris & Dr. Franklin Delegates in Congress & left out G. Clymer, J. Wilson, J. Smith, G. Ross, Dr. Rush, G. Taylor & J. Morton. The reason for leaving out so many old members, it is said, is that the new light Presbyterian Party have the ascendant in Assembly. The seven retiring members had all signed the Declaration of Independence.

On July 22, 1777, Clymer was reappointed in the place of William Moore, who had declined to serve, and James Wilson was added to the delegation. The retiring of George Taylor as a delegate to Congress, may have been the reason for his retiring from the Supreme Executive Council, and not attending any meetings after the above letter was written.

In 1779 the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates sold Galloway's right in the Durham plant and real estate at public sale. It was bought by four men, all colonels, Col. Richard Backhouse, Col. George Taylor, Col. Isaac Sidman, of Easton, and Col. Robert Lettis Hooper, Jr., who were equal partners. Most of the account books of that administration fell into my hands and are now in the library of the Bucks County Historical Society at Doylestown. These original and authentic records, as well as the public records contained in the Pennsylvania Archives, show that shot and shells were made at Durham continuously, in large quantities, throughout the entire period of the Revolutionary War.

The management of the Durham works, during this administration, devolved upon Col. Backhouse, who was the ruling spirit in that enterprise. He moved to Durham March 1, 1780, occupying the Mansion House heretofore referred to. At the termination of his five year lease of Durham Furnace in 1779, George Taylor was dispossessed by the Commissioner of Forfeited Estates, and then moved to Greenwich Township, New Jersey, where he was operating the Greenwich Forge, owned by Col. Hugh Hughes. He resided there until April, 1780, when he moved to Easton. This is shown by his letter to Col. Backhouse,



PARSONS-TAYLOR HOUSE, EASTON, PA.

The oldest house in Easton, Pa. Built by William Parsons, the founder of Easton, sometime between 1753 and 1757, and first occupied by him April 1757. Later the home of George Taylor, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, who leased the house and premises from the Estate of John Hughes, and moved there from Greenwich Forge, N. J., about April 10, 1780, and wherein he died February 23, 1781. At that time the property included all of Lot No. 176 on the original plan of Easton, 60 feet on Hamilton (now Fourth) Street, and 220 feet on Ferry Street. The old engravings show that there were kitchen and other out buildings attached to the stone house, the size of which is 27 feet front on Ferry Street, and 17 feet 9 inches front on Fourth Street. That part of the property on which the house stands 21 feet by 27 feet, was purchased January 15, 1906, by the George Taylor Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, which has placed a bronze tablet on the Fourth Street side, with the following inscription:—

THIS HOUSE BUILT IN 1757 BY
WILLIAM PARSONS
SURVEYOR GENERAL OF PENNSYLVANIA
AND THE HOME OF
GEORGE TAYLOR
SIGNER OF
THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
IS MAINTAINED BY THE
GEORGE TAYLOR CHAPTER
DAUGHTERS OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION
AS AN HISTORICAL MEMORIAL
1906

dated April 9, 1780, the original of which is in the New York State Library at Albany, and of which the following is a copy:

Dear Sir

Greenwich 9th April 1780

I proposed coming over to Day but have a Bad Cold & the weather unfavorable must Defer it until I move when Colo Hooper & I will spend a Day with you—If you can spare a Gallon of Rum please to send it by Tomm I expect some Waggon to morrow to Carry a part of my Family if you want the half Dozn Chairs I shall Leave them here for you I would have sent them by Snyder but was afraid they might be hurt amongst the Iron & other things in his waggon

I am Dear Sir

To Richard Backhouse
Durham

Yr. Huble Servt
Geo. Taylor

At Easton he made his home in this building where we are assembled this afternoon. He occupied the house under lease from the estate of John Hughes, Jr. It was built by William Parsons in 1753-54, and is said to be the oldest house in Easton, and wherein Parsons died December 22, 1757. The lot, at that time (No. 176 on the original plan of Easton) was 60 feet fronting on Hamilton (now Fourth) Street by 220 feet on Ferry Street. The old engravings show that there was a frame attachment to the stone house at that time. I will take pleasure in presenting one of these old etchings to this Society. Letters written by Geo. Taylor from Easton show that he kept a horse and two cows. It is therefore likely that his stables were also on that lot. There were doubtless also quarters for his slaves, for while living here he kept two slaves, which under the law for gradual abolition of slavery in Pennsylvania, passed March 1, 1780, he was obliged to register in the office of the Clerk of Sessions here at Easton. (See letter from George Taylor to Robert Levers, published in *Henry's History of the Lehigh Valley*, p. 97. This letter is now in possession of the Pennsylvania Historical Society.)

At the sale of his personal effects, by his executors, negro Tom 32 years old, sold for 280 bushels of wheat, valued at £77 or about \$205, and Sam, also 32 years, a cripple, fetched but £15 or about \$40. The inventory of his estate included four wigs, appraised at £1, but which "Mr. Levers thought improper to expose to sale."

It was here in this house, where we are assembled today, that

Col. Taylor passed away February 23, 1781, having lived here less than eleven months. This and the house at the northeast corner of Northampton and Second Streets, heretofore referred to, are the only houses in Easton wherein George Taylor resided. The original records of St. John's Lutheran Church, across the way, record the date of his death, and also the date of the passing of his son, James. These records would be conclusive evidence in any court of law, and should set at rest the date of Col. Taylor's death, for most historians say it was on February 25. Col. Taylor's will, dated January 6, 1781, is recorded here at Easton (Book I, p. 275), but the original document long since disappeared from the Recorder's office, and is now in the Archives of the New York Public Library, which has kindly made for me this photostat of it, which I now take pleasure in presenting to your Society. (An etching of the last part of Geo. Taylor's will with his signature and signatures of the three witnesses is shown herewith.) He appointed his three friends, Robert Lettis Hooper, Jr., Robert Traill and Robert Levers, as his executors. He gave to each of them a keepsake in the following words:

"Unto the said Robert Levers my silver mounted double barrel gun, to be engraved thus—The Gift of George Taylor, Esquire, and I likewise give and bequeath unto Robert Lettis Hooper, Jr., a neat silver mounted small sword, to be engraved thus—In Memory of George Taylor, Esquire, and unto the said Robert Traill I do give and bequeath one pair of pistols."¹²

Col. Hooper did not qualify as an executor, although his name appears as such in an advertisement, for settlement of the estate, which they inserted in the *Pennsylvania Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, for March 12, and April 4, 1781. Robert Levers died May 1788, leaving Robert Traill as the sole executor when the accounts were filed and audited in 1799, eighteen years after Col. Taylor's death. The settlement of his partnership accounts at Durham Iron Works were long drawn out, and on final settlement of his estate it was found to be insolvent.¹³

¹² These beautiful flint lock pistols are now owned by Dr. E. M. Green, of Easton, a great-grandson of Robert Traill, who has kindly allowed me to photograph them to use as a tail piece to this paper.

¹³ Henry's History of the Lehigh Valley, p. 97, and the report of auditors on file in the courthouse at Easton.



And I do further order & direct that in case any or all of my
Copartners in the Durham Iron Works should chose to take my Share of the
same into their Lands as Purchasers that they pay unto my Estate the
several Sums advanced by me into the said Partnership together with my
Share of the Profits that may have arisen thereon And in case of their and
every of their Refusal that my Executors sell & dispose of the same to any
Person or Persons for the best Price that can be gotten AND Lastly
Hereby Revoking all former & other Wills by me here before made, I do
declare this only to be my Testament and Last Will I'll Witness
whereof I the said George Taylor the Testator have hereunto set my Hand &
Seal the Sixth Day of January in the Year of our Lord One Thousand
and Seven Hundred and Eighty One.

Signed Sealed Published & Declared
The said George Taylor the Testator as and
for his Telegrams & Last Will in the Presence
of us the Subscribers who in his Presence and
his Request have signed our Names as Wit-
nesses hereunto.

Abram Berlin Jacob Berlin
Abram Prichard

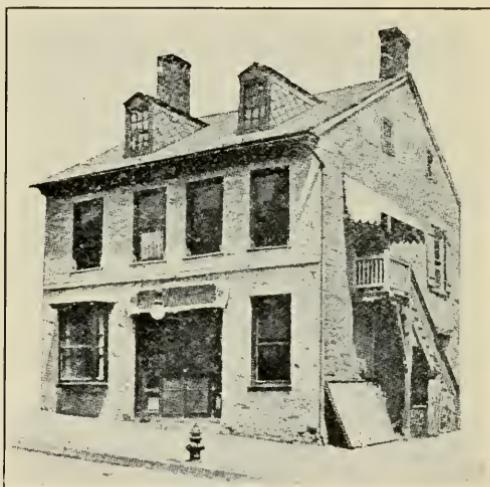
Geo Taylor
G

CLOSING PARAGRAPH OF GEORGE TAYLOR'S WILL, FULL SIZE.
Dated January 6, 1781, with his signature and signatures of witnesses.
(George Taylor died at Easton, February 23, 1781.)

COL. ROBERT LETTIS HOOPER, JR.

Bob. L. Hooper, Jr.

Col. Robert Lettis Hooper, Jr., was a man of more than ordinary parts. During the Revolutionary War he at first lived in Lower Saucon Township,¹⁴ but later, while filling the office of Deputy Quarter Master General, he lived in Easton, making his home in the stone house, still standing, at the northwest corner of Northampton and Fifth Streets. His first wife died while living in that house. You have, of course, noticed the exterior steps leading to the second story, as shown by the etching below.



HOME OF ROBERT LETTIS HOOPER, JR.
EASTON, PA.

Col. Hooper died at "Belleville," Trenton, N. J., July 30, 1797, in the sixty-sixth year of his age. In his will he bequeathed to the Trenton Lodge of Ancient Free & Accepted Masons, (chartered 1787) of which he was a member, "my silver hilted sword now in their possession, in testimony of the esteem and affection I bear the fraternity of that lodge in particular, and that the said

¹⁴ See his letter published in the Pennsylvania Magazine of History, Vol. XXIV, p. 391, wherein he says his home is in Saucon, five miles south of Bethlehem.

sword be new mounted by my executors and paid for out of my estate." This is doubtless the sword bequeathed to him by George Taylor, but the lodge has no record of it. Mrs. Hooper died in 1786.

Many letters written by Col. Hooper fell into my hands, most of which I gave to the Bucks County Historical Society. One of special interest I presented to Mrs. Abram S. Hewit (a daughter of Peter Cooper), who had it framed and hung in the hall of Ringwood Manor, her country home. That letter, addressed to Richard Backhouse is so interesting that I will read it as follows:

Ringwood, Septemr. 7th. 1781.

Sir:

I have long wished to visit you but my worthy friend, I have been too much engaged. I must not trifle with you & in plain truth I have been hunting a wife. I am sure among all my numerous acquaintances there is not one that esteems me more than you do, and I love you with the genuine warmth of true friendship—You, then, Dear Sir, must be pleased when I tell you that I am engaged to Mrs. Erskine, a lady high in estimation for her good sense, affability and sweetness of Temper & blessed withall with a plentiful fortune. I assure you that I do on the most deliberate principles of honor think that comfort and felicity will attend the choice I have made.

I am very anxious to see and converse with you on these important matters, which I cannot commit to writing, and if I can't see you next week I can't meet you this fall. If therefore this finds you at home I request you'll do me the favour to meet me at my house next Wednesday or Thursday when I will be at home. I am sure you'll come if you can, the business will be short and I cannot come to you.

* * * * *

My compliments wates on Mrs. Backhouse—accept my wishes for your prosperity and believe me,

To Richard Backhouse, Esqr.

Durham

Dr. Sir Yr Friend & Humble Sv.

R. L. Hooper, Jr.

(His marriage license was issued October 31, 1781.—See N. J. Archives, Vol. 22, page 185.)

The Marquis de Chastellux who stopped at Ringwood Furnace December 19, 1780, and called upon Mrs. Erskine, says:

"I entered a very handsome house where everybody was in mourning. Mr. Erskine being dead two months before. Mrs. Erskine his widow is about forty, and did not appear the less fresh or tranquil for her misfortune."

Robert Erskine, whose charming widow Col. Hooper was to

marry, was sent over from England by the London Company, in 1771, to superintend their iron mines. He lies buried on the Ringwood estate, which he was operating during the war. A marker erected by the Government contains this inscription:

“IN MEMORY OF ROBERT ERSKINE, F. R. S.
GEOGRAPHER AND SURVEYOR GENERAL TO THE ARMY OF THE
UNITED STATES.
SON OF REV. RALPH ERSKINE, LATE MINISTER AT DUNFERMLINE,
IN SCOTLAND.
BORN SEPTEMBER 7, 1735. DIED OCTOBER 2, 1780
AGED 45 YEARS AND 25 DAYS.

This monument is an object of interest to the Hewitt family and their guests. One of the Hewitt boys is named Erskine in memory of this man. It is quite a coincidence that in after years Messrs. Cooper & Hewitt should, at the same time, own both Ringwood and Durham properties, both established in early Colonial times. A splendid biographical notice of Col. Hooper is contained in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History*, Vol 36, p. 60 *et seq.*

Another letter from Col. Hooper to his friend Col. Backhouse, refers to his purchase of a large tract of land in the Genesee country, the land of the Six Nations, on the Susquehanna River in New York, which he called the “Land of Caanan.” When motoring through that interesting section last summer, I was surprised to notice, on the road between Binghamton and Owego, an automobile tire advertisement containing the following:

“When Binghamton was surveyed in 1786 by Col. Robert Lettis Hooper, Jr., he lay in a canoe recording the distances from a pocket compass, working in this way through fear of being shot by unfriendly Indians.”

James Wilson, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, Simeon DeWitt, Surveyor General of New York, and William Bingham, United States Senator, 1795 to 1801, were associated with Col. Hooper in these Genesee lands, which seem to have aggregated 30,620 acres, lying on both sides of the Susquehanna River. When the lands were partitioned, that part which was to become the site of Binghamton, N. Y., was apportioned to William Bingham, for whom that city was named.

ROBERT TRAILL.

Robert Traill was a leading and influential citizen of Easton, as one historian says, "in every respect, he was for many years everything to everybody." He was the ancestor of Dr. Edgar M. Green and his sister, Mrs. Dr. Charles McIntyre, who is present with us here today. He was born in the Orkney Islands, Scotland, April 29, 1744, emigrated to America in 1763, died at Easton July 31, 1816. In the early tax lists he is assessed as a shoemaker.¹⁵ Later he was a school teacher; member of the Committee of Safety from Northampton County;¹⁶ admitted to the bar of Northampton County in 1777; Justice of the Peace, 1777-1781; Sheriff of Northampton County, 1781-1784; Representative in the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, 1785-86; member of the Supreme Executive Council, 1786-87; and an Associate Judge of Northampton County, 1790-92. His body lies buried in the Easton Cemetery.

ROBERT LEVERS.

Robert Levers, the other of Col. Taylor's executors, was a great and fearless patriot during the Revolutionary struggle. He came to America from England in April, 1748. He taught school for a time near Philadelphia, then associated himself with the Moravians. Was associated with Mr. C. Brockden, Recorder of Deeds at Philadelphia for three months. He writes "I then went about 35 miles in the country to be a clerk at an iron works, where I stayed about four months at £50 cy. a year." Still later he was in the office of Richard Peters, whose partner he became in some land deals in Northampton County, making his home at Saylorsburg, where he also kept an hotel and store. He was appointed Prothonotary and Clerk of the Orphans Court for Northampton County, serving from 1777 to 1788. He was the authorized agent of the Supreme Executive Council for Easton and surrounding territory. On July 8, 1776, he gathered the people together, in Centre Square at Easton, by ringing the courthouse bell, and read to them, from the courthouse steps, the Declaration of Independence. Might it not be in order for this

¹⁵ See "History of Northampton County," published in 1873, where at page 73, a list of taxables is recorded.

¹⁶ Robert Traill was clerk of the Committee of Safety for Northampton County; see Pennsylvania Archives, Eighth Series, Vol V, p. 4. Dr. Edward M. Green has in his possession the original minutes kept by him.

society or for the people of Easton, to place a monument to his memory in Centre Square? When the British were about to enter Philadelphia in 1777, and the capital of our new-born nation transferred to Lancaster, Pa., the money, books and papers of the Colonial Government were sent to him at Easton for safe keeping.¹⁷ He stored them in his bedroom on the second story of his house, which he rented from Conrad Ihrie, Sr., located on the east side of South Third Street. Robert Levers was in fact the local dictator of the new government, reporting all cases of disloyalty or seeming disloyalty, guarding the ferries over both rivers, and putting all suspects under arrest. It was his duty to see that the Oath of Allegiance was taken, particularly by former office holders. It was through him that Hon. John Penn, then Governor for the Proprietaries, former Lieutenant-Governor James Hamilton, Assemblyman James Allen and Chief Justice Benjamin Chew were put under parole. They were ordered by the Supreme Executive Council to be "imprisoned and removed from the state." It appears, however, that they were permitted to remain under parole at the home of James Allen at Allentown. Later several of them were removed to the Union Iron Works, near Clinton, N. J., owned by former Chief Justice William Allen and Joseph Turner. Robert Levers died at Easton May 20, 1788, while holding the position of Prothonotary. He left to survive him four children and a widow *nec* Mary Church, who died in 1810.

GEORGE TAYLOR'S DEATH AND BURIAL.

A letter in the archives of the Bucks County Historical Society from Samuel Williams of Greenwich Forge, N. J., to Richard Backhouse at Durham, bearing date February 22, 1781, one day before George Taylor passed away, concludes as follows:

I was up at Easton when your Boy was over Taking wheat to Mr. Taylor as he was always sending for money and I had none to give him. But poor Owld gentlemen I believe his Dunning is allmost at an End—I did not see him as he could not be Spoke with he has Been Tapt Twice the Doctor told me.

As already stated he died at Easton, February 23, 1781, his body was laid at rest in the Lutheran churchyard across

¹⁷ See many references in Colonial Records, Vols. XI, XII, XIV, and XV, also Pennsylvania Archives, First Series, Vols. V and VI. Also Pennsylvania Magazine of History, Vol. I, p. 137.



GEORGE TAYLOR MONUMENT IN EASTON CEMETERY.

Erected to his memory in 1854. On April 20, 1870, his body was removed from the yard of St. John's Lutheran Church, Easton, Pa., and re-interred immediately in front of this monument, which bears the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF
GEORGE TAYLOR
ONE OF THE SIGNERS
OF THE DECLARATION OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.
JULY 4, A. D. 1776.
BORN 1716, DIED 1781.

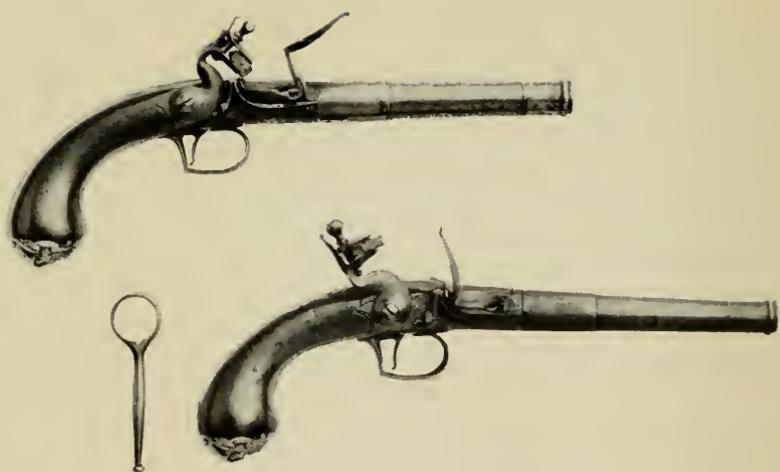
the way, on the southeast corner of Fourth and Ferry Streets. When the Belvidere Delaware Railroad, now part of the Pennsylvania system, was extended to Phillipsburg in 1854, the event was celebrated on February 3d of that year, with a grand entertainment and reception by the citizens of Easton and Phillipsburg, for which a large amount of money had been subscribed. A special train of fifteen cars started from Philadelphia, carrying officials and guests from that city, and from Trenton and other points, which included the Governor of New Jersey and the heads of departments, and many other distinguished citizens.¹⁸ The money subscribed for that entertainment, which included a grand ball in the evening, was not all used, and at the suggestion of Judge James M. Porter, the balance was expended to erect, in the Easton Cemetery, that beautiful Italian marble monument to the memory of George Taylor.¹⁹ His body, however, was allowed to remain in the Lutheran churchyard until the Easton school-board purchased that corner from St. John's Lutheran Church, when on April 20, 1870, it was removed to the Easton Cemetery and deposited in its last resting place on the east side of the monument.²⁰ The school-board still further honored his memory by naming that schoolhouse "The Taylor Building."

I wish, for the sake of this patriotic Society, that I could arrive at a different conclusion, but the fact remains, and the preponderance of evidence shows, that George Taylor was a resident of Durham Township, in Bucks County, when on August 2, 1776, he affixed his signature to that immortal document the Declaration of Independence.

¹⁸ See Henry's History of the Lehigh Valley, pp. 151 to 157.

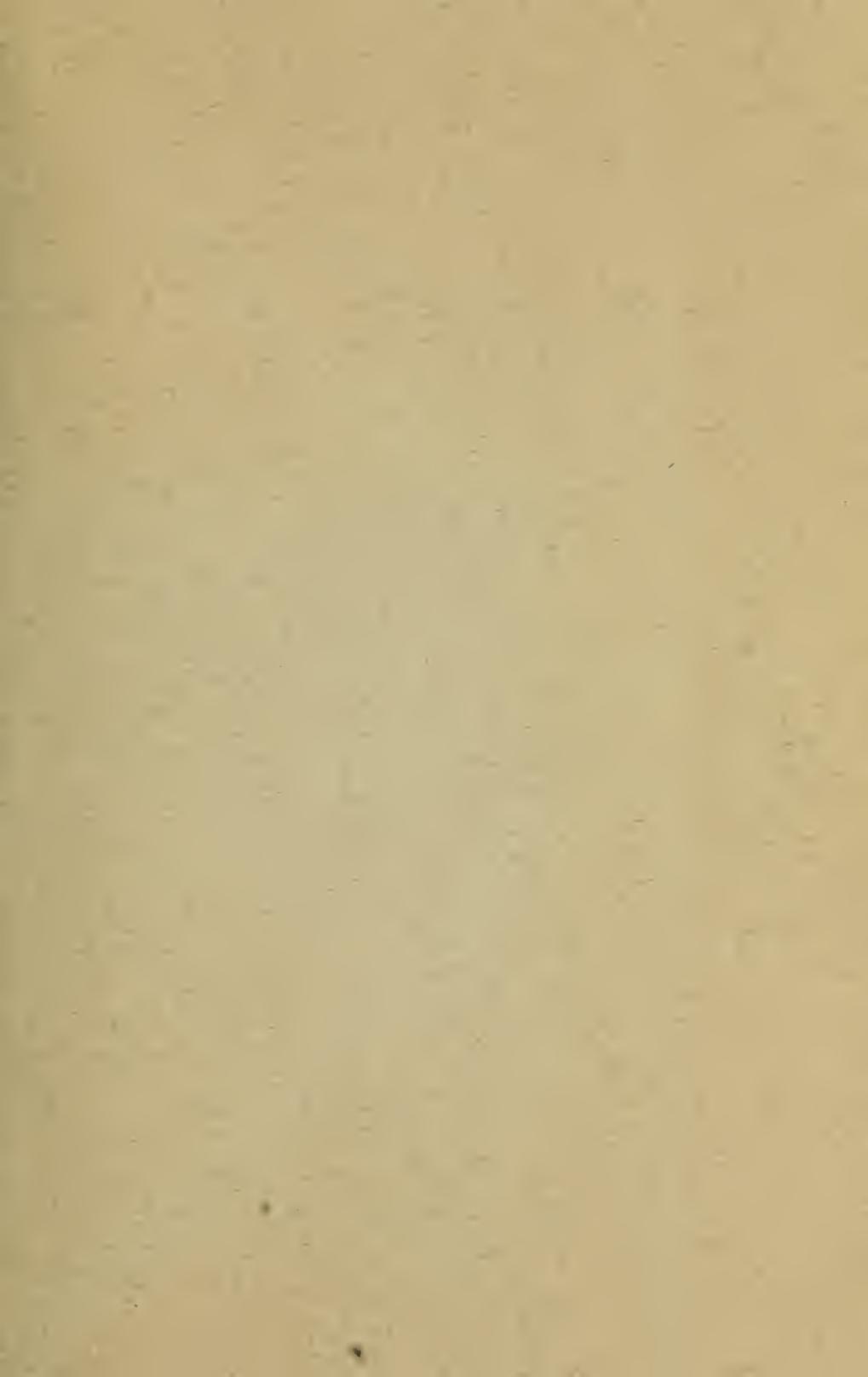
¹⁹ Recollections of B. F. Fackenthal, Sr., Esq. (b. 1825, d. 1892).

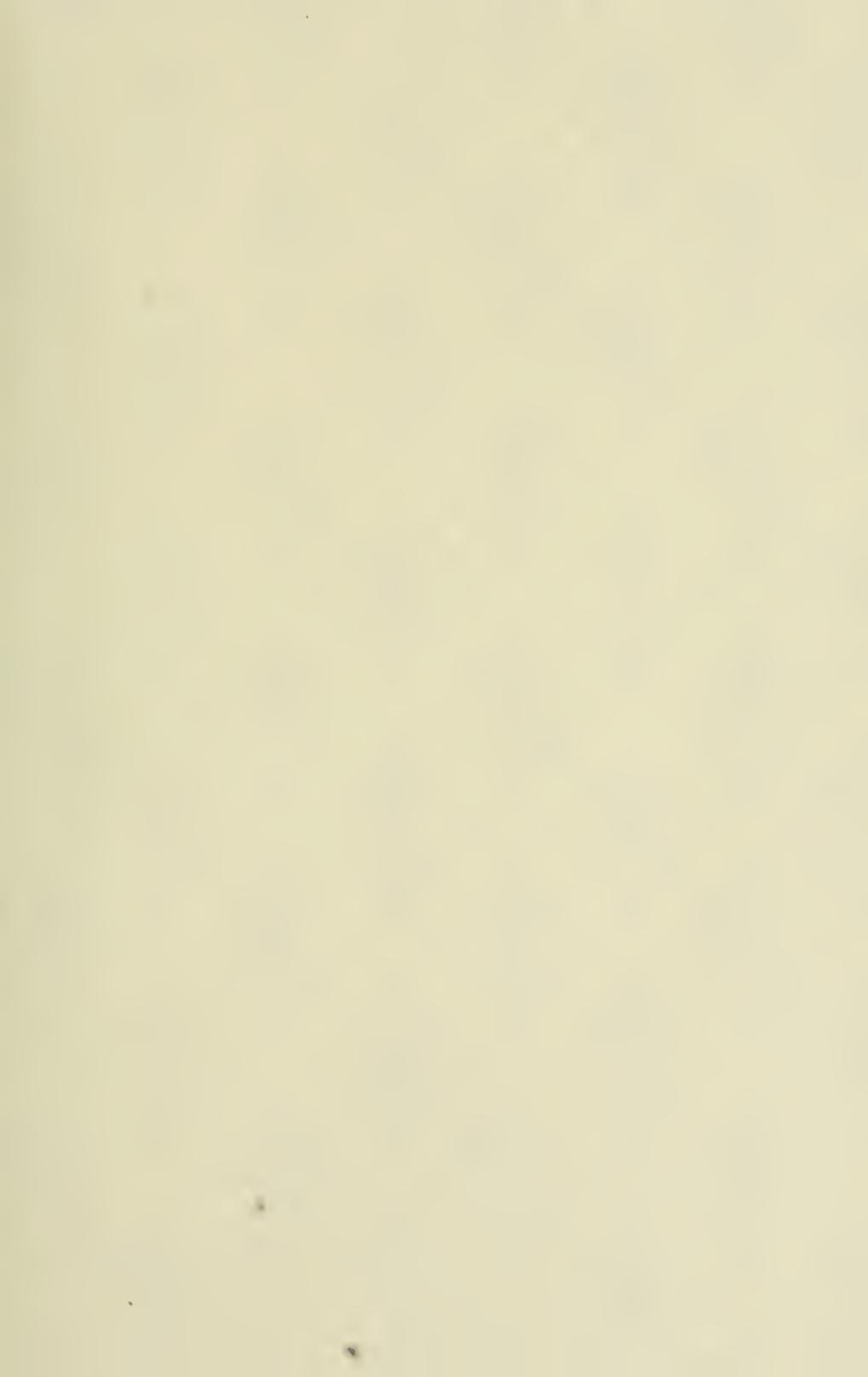
²⁰ Official Records of the Easton Cemetery.



Flint lock pistols which George Taylor bequeathed to Robert Traill.
Now in possession of Dr. Edgar M. Green of Easton, Pa.









JAN 13 1989

